

THE SPORT OF THE GODS



Released in 1921, the silent film *The Sport of the Gods* tells the story of a man who loyally serves a prison sentence for a crime committed by a friend. When his wife and children move from Virginia to New York City to escape disgrace, their moral fiber is tested by the demands of survival in their new northern home.

The Sport of the Gods was produced by the Reol Motion Picture Corporation. Formed after World War I, Reol produced several movies for black audiences. The company survived only briefly, but it is sometimes credited with being one of the first companies to adapt literary works by African Americans for the silver screen.

The film was based on the 1902 novel of the same name by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906). Remembered primarily as a poet, Dunbar also wrote four novels. At the turn of the 20th century, he was one of the most widely read American poets and one of the first popular African-American writers. Dunbar was honored on a 10-cent U.S. stamp in 1975.

The poster for *The Sport of the Gods* depicts Jim Skaggs, played by Edward R. Abrams, embracing a reluctant Kitty Hamilton, played by Elizabeth Boyer. The logo for the Reol Motion Picture Corporation appears in the upper left corner. The lower third of the poster reads: "THE SPORT OF THE GODS / BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR / AMERICA'S GREATEST RACE POET AND AUTHOR / A TRUE-TO-LIFE STORY OF / ACTION, THRILLS AND HEART INTEREST / WITH AN ALL-STAR CAST OF COLORED ARTISTS / PRODUCED BY / REOL PRODUCTIONS CORPORATION." The poster artwork was obtained from the collection at the University of California, Los Angeles. The artist is unknown.